

Editorial: The World, the Environment, and Peace Education

By Anne Covell Newton

At the 1993 TESOL Convention, held in Atlanta in April, more than 120 presentations related to the topic of content-based instruction.

Instruction based on content is hardly new. Throughout the ages (except in the heyday of the structuralist-behaviorist approach--an attempt to make language teaching "scientific" by divorcing it from meaning and cognition) thoughtful, conscientious language teachers have tried to include some meaningful subject matter in their lessons. In recent years this has received a new impetus.

There are mainly two reasons for basing lessons on content as well as on language structure. Sometimes the learning of specific information is of equal or even greater importance than learning the language itself. Another reason has to do with motivation and communication--with finding something that will engage the students' interest and make interaction in the language more meaningful.

As Stempleski points out in this issue's lead article, teachers all around the world are using the environmental theme as a means of linking the classroom to the world. Also, Avila et al. (see p. 12) tell how they chose as the main characters for their new countrywide textbook an international group of students who come together to learn about the environmental problems threatening the earth and to try to find ways to help. The twofold purpose of this content-based instruction reflects the authors' deep conviction that this subject matter needs to be taught for its own sake as well as their recognition of its intrinsic appeal to motivate and involve teenagers in learning English as an international language.

The environment includes human society as well as nature. Therefore, the subject of peace education (as articulated in Reinhold Freudenstein's paper at Georgetown University last March) is not an unrelated issue. In fact, a number of members of the TESOL organization have linked these subject in proclaiming their interest in "global, environmental, and peace education."

Historians tell us that the final years of each century tend to be a time of accelerated activity and change. What, then, may we expect for the closing years of a *millennium*? The next seven years may well bring changes beyond our present imagining in global as in individual thought and action. This presages a challenging, interesting--even thrilling--period of life and work for the teacher of English as an international language. The current stirrings in environmental and peace education are but the prologue.